



ILLINOIS ATTORNEY GENERAL LISA MADIGAN

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From the Illinois Senate
Senator Toi Hutchinson

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STALKING AND CYBERSTALKING BILL MOVES OUT OF COMMITTEE

Springfield, IL— State Senator Toi Hutchinson (D – Olympia Fields) and Attorney General Lisa Madigan today announced that a bill designed to strengthen Illinois' stalking and cyberstalking laws has passed the Senate Committee on Criminal Law and now heads to the Senate floor.

House Bill 2542 – co-sponsored by State Representatives Fred Crespo (D-Streamwood) and Karen Yarbrough (D-Broadview) – broadens the definition of stalking by criminalizing behaviors that clearly cause victims fear or emotional distress even if there has been no personal contact. Recognizing that not all stalking behaviors involve threats of bodily harm, the legislation would establish a procedure for victims to obtain a "stalking no-contact order." Current law only allows orders of protection when an established relationship exists between victims and their stalkers, but statistics show that victims don't always know their stalkers. In addition, a recent report by the U.S. Department of Justice shows that nearly 70 percent of stalking victims were unable to obtain protection orders.

The proposed legislation also covers current and future technologies that stalkers may use to track and harass their victims. Stalkers currently can use a range of devices – such as computers, global positioning systems, or hidden cameras – to track victims. By taking into consideration the way stalkers use new technology, the legislation will enhance law enforcement's ability to protect victims.

"Many times a person feels threatened but is unsure if the acts that are making them feel unsafe constitute as stalking," Senator Hutchinson said. "This bill gives a clear definition to what exactly stalking and cyberstalking is."

"Unlike other crimes, stalking is not a single, easily identifiable event but a series of acts directed against a victim," Attorney General Madigan said. "So even when victims know there's a danger, it can be difficult for law enforcement to investigate, prosecute and convict stalkers. With the input of law enforcement and victim advocates, we created this important piece of legislation to give victims greater protection and law enforcement better tools to prosecute and, ultimately, prevent incidents of stalking."

“As a lawmaker, a husband and a father of two young daughters I want to do everything possible to give both victims and law enforcement the tools they need to put a stop to stalkers and prevent violent crimes against women before they happen,” Representative Crespo said. “No woman should be forced to live in fear as a result of the threats or actions of a stalker. I am hopeful this new legislation will provide victims of stalking with peace of mind as well as put potential stalkers on notice that they will be severely punished if they attempt to threaten or harm a victim.”

“With advances in technology and weaknesses in the current law, stalkers are finding new ways to harass and intimidate their victims,” said Representative Yarbrough. “It’s important that we expand the definition of stalking to give law enforcement the tools they need to deal with this serious crime.”

The crimes of stalking or cyberstalking are considered a Class 4 Felony with one to three years in prison and a \$25,000 fine.

“People should be punished accordingly for making others live in fear,” said Senator Hutchinson. “I am glad that we are taking steps to ensure everyone’s safety.”